

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL(For Dominion Presbyterian.)
THE WRONG VALENTINE.

By Mary I. Houston.

"Oh girls! I have a fine idea," said Amy Joyce as she came out of the school yard gate, the centre of a group of girls. "You remember how mean old Mr. Miller was about putting those nasty ashes on the hill so that we could not slide. Well, I have a scheme; let us send him one of those ugly valentines next week, just to let him see what we think of him." And Amy's blue eyes shone with excitement at the thought of thus getting even with the man who had spoiled so much of their fun. "Yes, let's," answered one of the girls, for Amy's word was always law with the little crowd of girls among whom she was the ring leader. "Hattie Rogers will address the envelope, because she is the best writer; and then we can put it so that he will get it the first thing on St. Valentine's day. My! won't he be mad when he opens it though!" merry laugh came from the little group at the thought of Mr. Miller's feelings when he receives his valentine.

"All right. I'll address it," said Hattie, "but I do not think there is any use in posting it. I'm sure old Mr. Miller never gets any letters, and he might not go to the post office for ever so long. One of you girls had better take it up and slip it under his door. Amy, you pass that way so you will have to do it."

"Well, I will, but don't any of you girls tell anything about it or it will spoil all our fun."

No more was said about the valentine that day, but all the following week mysterious smiles and knowing glances passed among the girls. So on the evening of the thirteenth of February the valentine had been selected, carefully folded away in an envelope and addressed to Mr. William Miller, Esq., in Hattie's best writing. Amy had put it carefully in her pocket, as she parted from the girls at the corner, promising to start for school early next morning and leave it at the old man's door.

There was not one of these girls who would have intentionally hurt any one's feelings or have stooped to do a mean act; but the sending of the valentine was looked upon as a joke, and a man as mean as Mr. Miller deserved to get the ugliest one possible, they all declared.

"Why, Amy," said Mrs. Joyce, the next morning, "you are eating no breakfast. What is the matter? There is no need of such haste, for there is fully an hour until school time. By the way, my dear, I want you to go around by Miss Jennings and leave this envelope with her. It contains a few verses that I promised to write out for her." "All right, Mamma, I

won't forget," answered Amy, as she arose from the table and began collecting her books and getting her things ready for school. As she pulled on her jacket she felt in the pocket to see if the valentine was safe. Yes, there it was all ready to be delivered, so putting her mother's envelope in the other pocket she started off down the snowy street.

As she neared the house where Mr. Miller lived with his old servant she began to feel the least bit nervous. What if he should see her and come out ore set his big dog on her? But she had promised to do it, so, as no one was in sight, she quietly opened the gate and made her way through the snow drifts, up to the house. Stooping down she slipped the envelope beneath the door and then ran quickly away, not stopping until she had turned the corner. "Well, that's done," she said to herself. "I wonder what he will say when he opens it. I hope no one saw me. Now, I must go around by Miss Jennings; I almost forgot that."

When she reached the little cottage where Miss Jennings lived she drew out the envelope and prepared to ring the bell. She gave such a start when she saw it. Oh! what had she done? Here was the envelope addressed to Mr. Miller. She had slipped the wrong one under his door. What would the girls say? She was so sure that she had put that envelope into the other pocket. The school bell rang at this moment so she had no time to waste; she hurried in after the rest of the girls had taken their places, so there was no chance of telling them of her mistake.

How long that morning did seem; but at last it was over and the girls crowded around her with eager questions. When she told them what she had done a chorus of "Oh's" came from the disappointed girls. Their good joke was spoiled and Amy knew that the girls all blamed her for her carelessness. She said very little on the way home and when she left the other girls at the corner, she had all she could do to force back the hot tears that would come into her eyes. As she came near to the Miller house she saw that the old gentleman was standing at the gate, rather an unusual thing for him; for, as a rule, he seemed to wish to avoid every one.

Amy quickened her pace and was passing him with downcast eyes when he spoke in a voice less harsh than she expected from him.

"Are you the little girl who put this under my door this morning?" he asked, holding up the white envelope.

"Yes, sir," said Amy in a frightened tone.

"Well, child," he said, not unkindly, "you have done what I thought it im-

possible for any one to do; you have drawn tears from eyes that have been dry for thirty years and have melted some of the ice about a stony heart. Those little verses, my darling used to sing to me; my only child, whose sunny life was cut off in a moment, leaving me the hardened man I have been ever since. Never a Christian man, I strove to be good for Jessie's sake, and might have succeeded. From the hour that her lifeless body was brought home to me, I grew harder every year. Men have tried to reach me by prayer and sermons, but it was of no use. Now your little verses have brought back a flood of memories of little Jessie, who was so like you. Often when I have watched you passing my heart cried out at the injustice that had taken from me my one treasure and left with me the money that I valued only for her sake."

Amy's fear had now given way to pity. Poor old Mr. Miller was not so bad as she had thought him. Her cheeks burned as she thought of how she had come so near giving him that horrid valentine. And he had lost his only child; she had never heard of that.

"Yes, you are like Jessie," went on the old man. When I saw you sliding down the hill I spread ashes that you might not meet with her sad fate. It was there she lost her life. I thought you children would hate me for it for you would not understand; but I did it for her sake."

The tears were now falling fast from the old man's eyes and Amy's heart went out to him in his bitter sorrow. How thankful she was now that she had made the mistake in the envelopes. How she despised herself for what she had planned to do. Reaching out her small hand she quietly stroked that of the old man.

Please let me be your friend for Jessie's sake," she said with a sob. "We never knew about her, and always thought you hated us."

And they did become fast friends, and everyone wondered at the change that had come over Amy Joyce. The valentine sent in such an unworthy spirit had been the means of leading an old man to the light and taught a never to be forgotten lesson to a band of thoughtless little girls.

Cannington, Ont.

If wisdom smile, let wisdom go!

All things above

This is the truest: that we know because we

love.

Not love because we know.

—Arthur Sherburne Hardy.

When a knife has been used to cut onions, wipe it with a damp cloth and rub it briskly with coarse salt. The objectionable smell will then entirely disappear.